

LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

continuing

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

Edited by ROBERT HERRING

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EDITORIAL

1941

THERE IS A type of correspondent who begins his, or her, letter with "Dear Sir, I am just a"—country clergyman, schoolgirl, lion-tamer, or retired petty-officer's widow as the case may be. I have never known whether the "just" is meant to mean recently or barely; wholly or nothing else but. I have learnt, however, that after this would-be winning self-depreciating opening, the writer invariably proceeds to say what is wrong with the paper, to unfold a New Order for its conduct in terms as definite as would befit someone signing themselves "Just a superman, Socrates", or "Cordially, Confucius".

Usually, I do not reply. Anyone who is "just" a so-and-so is clearly too self-conscious in being that to be capable of unbiassed judgment. But to a recent letter of this type I do reply. "I am just a working man. I read your paper and I find it highbrow. . . ." The answer is that a few years ago just a working man would not have attempted to read a monthly literary review; we must be grateful to such publications as *Picture Post* and *New Writing* for encouraging him to make that effort. But how wide the gap still is is made evident

by the fact that whereas I would never dream of saying to an engineer, "I read your works magazine, and I find it too scientific", or to a doctor, "The trouble with *The Lancet* is that it's medical," anyone is at liberty to decry any form of writing that they are unable to assimilate on a first and usually hurried reading.

That liberty is part of the old way of living. In the new way it will not be so evident. As I have before had occasion to remark, it is never for a Free Britain that we plan, but for a New Britain, and some of the plans put forward for that New Britain sound suspiciously like the "New Order" imposed elsewhere. Indeed, it is hard not to come to the conclusion that the reason why some are so keen on the new order they envisage is that they see themselves giving the orders. And the orders appear to be negative. Plans for reconstruction are not phrased that "There shall be" this or that, which is approved, but that "There shall not be this", which isn't, and as everyone still has the right to disapprove, it follows that plans for the New Britain appear more concerned with doing away with what the enemy has left undestroyed than in building up.

The irony of this is well suited to a world in which men's plans go so unfailingly as expected that we find Ellen Wilkinson being heckled by Communists and the Archbishop calling for a day of prayer for Russia; in which the V sign, intended for conquered countries, is adopted by Britain; in which London and Naples are bombed, and we talk of building a beautiful world, as if the human race had never previously created any beauty whatever.

Half the cities of Europe are maimed, and we talk

of social amelioration. Men by the hundred-thousand kill or are killed on the Eastern front and we talk—or do we talk of them? Does not *that* spectacle force us into a mental two-minutes' silence? For if these men, poured out as freely as official paper and petrol, mean nothing at all, we are up against two difficult facts in the planning of our New World. Are we the richer or poorer for the loss of these lives?

If the poorer, this New World so glibly mooted will take the longer to set on an even keel. If the richer—it seems rash to plan a new one, which will replace these lives with others for whose superiority, in the light of history, there is less than no guarantee. No one, even to-day, imagines that human nature can change overnight. Life, indeed, would be even bleaker than we have made it at present were the eras so cut off from each other that the change between them was complete.

For better or for worse, change is never complete. Nor is there such a thing as a clean break. There may be a sharp break, so sharp that what is broken in one way breaks out in another. But that is change deflected from its natural course and made, instead of continuous, disrupted and destructive. Most of the plans for a new life, world, country, system, come from that. The shock of disruption, whether through bombing, call-up, dread of either, or economic short-circuit, makes many feel that their old way of life has let them down. They therefore turn against it. They rail against the world of 1939, without considering that, had they then wished, it was a better world on which to improve than will be the remnants of this when we have done with it. Living in this, they console themselves with plans for the

future, in a manner which makes the ostrich a model of unflinching and almost periscopic foresight.

The old world was far from perfect, or even pleasant. For one thing it nourished those who are now making so much noise, hitting their hollow chests and booming like Tarzan, in scantily-clothed mentality, for new worlds to toy with as a conker.

Readers may think that our determined refusal on this paper to cry "Clap hands, here comes Charlie", about New Worlds is reactionary. In war, common sense often seems so. But to knock half the buildings in Europe sky-high and bury a great many people six feet deep (if there's enough left to bury) is not necessarily to be left with the right material for an equation that seeks to say "*equals* noble people in lovely new towns", and it is only continued belief in that fairy-bird, the Phoenix, that makes some people think it is.

The Phoenix does not stand for resurrection. It is merely symbol of irresponsibility. It dies, and it rises out of its ashes. Therefore, its worshippers think, it is a sign of life. Therefore, with Phoenix as example, Death can be faced. Death, as the raids have shown us, can always be faced. It is life that can't be. It is life, present life, that is gainsaid by the Phoenix. The Phoenix does not face life, but throws itself on destruction—it is man's statement that life need not be taken seriously, since it is curtailed by death; and death, on the other hand, need not be taken too seriously, since there is life beyond that. And so the cycle goes on, with people always ready to begin something else, rather than to make the best use of what they have already to hand.

Out of the ashes of this world, another will arise. A world that any person of unblunted senses will see as both a Home of the Future and a Tomb of the past—a tomb built on scorched earth, of bombed rubble, housing perhaps our children but haunted by those of our families, of our friends and of our foes who have been burnt, blasted, bayoneted, drowned, driven mad, blinded, or starved. And all these means of accelerating an inevitable end have been invented and improved on by us—who, by our smugness and selfishness having allowed the destruction of this world, think ourselves thereby qualified architects for the new. . . .

There is only one way in which we can even deserve to participate in whatever span of life is left us when at last the war wears itself out. That is, not by making blue-prints for to-morrow, but by studying our temperature charts to-day. By controlling ourselves, by continuing to exercise our minds, by keeping our feelings weatherproof but aware. By, in short, retaining, however raggedly, some vestige by which we may be recognized as human beings and not werewolves on the cessation of hostilities. For none wins any conflict, be it an external war or an inner crisis, who emerges from it not more but less civilized than when he entered it.

Wherefore it must be begged of certain irresponsible gentlemen to go quietly on their new Phoenix age. Let them look at their temperature chart and remember that when voices get shrill, and answers short, when tempers rise and taste drops, something is wrong. When one is ill, one dreams always of what one will do when one is well. There is less hashish and more heroism in not falling ill. Lucidity in the long run triumphs over emotionalism. The last war promised us a land "fit for

heroes to live in". The gibe was that it took a hero to be able to live in it. This war has called for continued heroism from all sections of the populace—I would stress the "all", because when it is said that this is a people's war it is implied also that it is only one section of the people or public. But all sections of the populace have had to draw up from themselves the bravery they never knew they possessed. They must beware lest they also find untapped a complementary brutality. It will be a poor thing if we create from this war a world fit, not for heroes, but for only barbarians to live in.

It would suit a great many people if most of us were made barbarians. For then one minority could supplant another. And then, when the signposts were put back, they would be inscribed simply "Thou shalt *not*", instead of "Thou mayst all things, if thou deservest".... In the words of another signpost, "You have been warned."

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It has always been with pleasure that we have noted how tacitly the newcomer *Horizon* has followed in our footsteps. Mass Observation, to which we first gave prominence, has found a happy home in its pages; a number of writers whom we were the first in this country to present cohesively has been hailed as "the Welsh Renaissance", even to the extent of announcing in the American branch, *Decision*, George Ewart Evans as a "*Horizon* discovery". Our recent campaign for the need of particular attention in wartime to a right use of words has been taken up in the October issue. But here, unfortunately, we part company. In suggesting that writers should be licensed,

like dogs, it seems to us that *Horizon* is playing into the hands of all those who consider artists pariahs. The public may not know, but *Horizon* should, that it is a test of a journalist's pride in his profession whether he consents to use clichés or not; there are newspapers in which shoddiness of thought and expression are as tabu as are any absence of acidity or agitation in others. There is at least one newspaper which has a list of words it prefers its contributors not to use—without any marked saving of triteness, be it added. When *Horizon*, even laughingly, suggests that writers be given licences, which shall be endorsed if authority does not approve of their style or their statement, I feel it leads readers on to dangerous ground. It has been tried in other countries, with results that we know. Moreover, no writer worth his salt needs such an imposition of discipline from without, for the setting of pen to paper is solution of much personal discipline; the common writers have their own purgatory, through which they never work, nor does it matter very much if they write “vital necessity”, for the part of the public from which they spring, to which they write, and to which they are perhaps qualified to write, needs still to be told a thing twice. One does not look to the penny and picture papers for correct use of prose (did not a certain press lord observe of his properties that one was for those who had just learnt to read, another for those who were beginning to?). One does, however, look to monthly reviews for an upholding rather than a limitation of liberty. We are grateful in dark days for light reading, but, as I suggested at the beginning of this Editorial, plenty read us who are not yet ready to understand what they see, and the particular joke of first licensing

writers and then, on a later page, implying that if they wear their muzzles nicely they'll be given a lovely biscuit, in the shape of a kennel marked "Reserved Occupation", seems wrong. Irony for its effect depends upon contrast and in a world already so full of it that the B.B.C. can fade out the first performance of a new work by William Walton whilst forcing (one presumes, since he sounded so wavering) Stephen Spender the next night alternately to describe Walt Whitman as "a sort of R.A.M.C. man" and "the John the Baptist of democratic poetry" (the Pilate not specified), it seems that irony can be misunderstood, and we dissociate ourselves, therefore, from any future developing by *Horizon* of matter previously enunciated here.

FLIGHT OUT OF FRANCE

By BRYHER

THERE HAVE ALWAYS been two types in England ; the isolationist, the "red tapeworm", the man who has spent his holiday at the same watering place for forty years and is proud of it, and the pioneer who thinks of Clive and Doughty, Cochrane and Burton. We owe the most to the second group, though we may hate to admit it. Without them there would be no dollar exchange, no supplies from Canada and Australia, no oil from Iran and Iraq. This group feels its isolation, now that the continents are cut off, more than any rationing, hence its hunger for news, any news, of "what happened in France".

Some people like to read one account only. Others, myself among them, want to read every item possible. Any authentic record seems valuable because from thousands of apparently similar stories we can construct a picture out of the jigsaw of formless details that is clear and sharp if it is, at the present moment, simply an outline.

Among the many books published on the Flight from France, one is outstanding. It is, *I Came Out of France*, by Cecily Mackworth (Routledge, 7s. 6d.). The author, a Welsh girl married to a Belgian, had lived in Paris for seven years and had no wish to leave her adopted country. She draws an unforgettable portrait of the capital in the last days, with starving masses in the large squares, become as the gendarme told her, a vast monster, savage and quiet by turns, with no one knowing what to do nor what had happened until all thought focused on a single impulse, that of flight.

There were panics and migrations in the Middle Ages, but who could have foreseen that, almost in the middle of the twentieth century, literally millions of people would take to the roads and stream downwards, from Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium, and Paris towards a small area of southern France?

The book continues quietly, always with pictures. There is the mingled excitement of picking a lift with complete strangers, of straggling along the roads on foot, of sudden hospitality and moments of blank despair. There are British soldiers escaping southward on a lorry, only those who have adopted another country as their home will understand the author's hesitation and ultimate refusal of a passage with them to probable safety, the dying refugees, the child whose whole family has been killed, the country people for whom still the war was a vague event, a "Tour de France" in which they had no concern. She understands the horror of Marseilles, with Gestapo and underworld, Polish soldiers, refugees and middle-class French, all mixed up in a nightmare of horror under an exterior that Renoir might have painted, where death walked in a bowler hat and destinies depended upon a slip of paper. I, too, saw Port Bou again, the apparent peace, the goats, the tranquil landscape; then as contrast the crowded frontier office whence some escaped and some were suicides and others had to turn again to the steep stony road that led back into France.

This is a volume that is not just "news" but can be read for its quality of literature when this war is as dim a memory as 1914 is to those who were then school-children.

Captured, by Bessie Myers (Harrap, 8s. 6d.) and

Occupied Territory, by Polly Peabody (Cresset Press, 8s. 6d.), have this in common, both are written by ambulance drivers, one American and one English. The American volume is the more thoughtful, that of Miss Myers the more exciting. *Captured* is a thrilling story; a cliché, but no other term fits the book so well. Miss Myers and her friends were taken prisoners, at first they were permitted to help nurse French wounded, but afterwards, having been denounced as spies, apparently by a French doctor, they were imprisoned in the notorious Cherche Midi, and then in the convent prison at Fresnes. Inevitably the book recalls that magnificent record of the last war, *The Enormous Room*, by E. E. Cummings. The tragedy is, that in the intervening years, the French seem to have learnt nothing and altered nothing, for the insanitary conditions, bugs, dirt, and conditions of the cells were due to the French administration and not to the German invaders. Some years ago a French newspaper tried to enlist public support to wipe out the child reformatories, where many inmates (children who would have been placed on probation in England) died from fever and neglect or emerged, corrupted beyond hope of reform. The attempt failed. Yet this reluctance to bring the standards of their institutions up to the level of other nations, was an important factor in the French collapse. How can machines be run efficiently when barracks and factories are clogged with dirt, littered with rubbish, and inadequately lit? Something has gone, too, from the moral fibre of a people where such conditions are tolerated.

Both Miss Myers and Miss Peabody saw the external picture of the French defeat but were as naïve as children

so far as political aspects were concerned. Both were introduced to Pétain and seem to have accepted Vichy propaganda about him at face value, yet he had been regarded as "uncertain" for years (there is an interesting passage about Foch's estimate of him in the War Memoirs of Lloyd George) and most intelligent Frenchmen detested him, both before and after the armistice. The breakdown of French morale through their non-intervention policy in Spain is never mentioned. Miss Peabody also repeats the Vichy stories about the decay of communism. Whether one likes it or not, however, the communists were one of the few groups who continued to organize resistance after the collapse.

Every record is valuable in these days of our isolation, and these three books can be recommended to readers, Mrs. Mackworth's for its literary excellence, that of Miss Myers for its sheer adventure, and the one by Miss Peabody for its picture of Paris as an occupied city.

A Farm in Normandy by Robert Hendry (Dent, 12s. 6d.) is worth study because it was precisely some of these hard-working, well-meaning people who contributed, unconsciously to the French collapse. The author seems to have had no idea of the real meaning behind the Popular Front. Some of its measures were exaggerated, but labour and factory conditions in France were thirty years behind those of England, and as a result not necessarily the workers, but the employers as well, were restricted in vision, efficiency, and initiative. As the story shows, so much of what is praised as peasant thrift is simply obstinacy and a distaste for everything new. The insanity and suicide that appear to have been common in the district can be traced in many instances to the narrow conception of life prevalent among so many

French families. One is sorry not only for the author but for the thousands of people who lost their homes and possessions, but the citizen has a duty, not to obey laws merely, but if necessary to alter and improve them. The book, otherwise, gives a delightful picture of farm and country life in northern France.

THREE SPANISH DAYS

By CECILY MACKWORTH

I ARRIVED IN Barcelona at the end of July, 1940, after six weeks spent in dodging German soldiers and French gendarmes. My worldly possessions consisted of the clothes I stood up in, a false passport, and two pesetas left me by the rapacious money-changers at the frontier station. I knew no Spanish, and I had heard enough about Franco's prisons to make me realize that I was quite likely to find my way into one of them before I reached the Portuguese border.

It was almost dark and the town seemed very large and unfriendly. I started to walk, looking for the sort of hotel where I could stay without paying in advance, but I was soon lost. I suppose I looked the picture of a bewildered foreigner, for presently a young man came up and spoke to me in French, asking if he could help me. He wore the uniform of a Spanish officer, with an enormous number of medals and crosses decorating his chest. I told him what I wanted, and he said that although he did not know of any suitable hotel, he could take me to the pension (*très convenable*) where he himself lived with some brother officers.

The pension was kept by a peroxide blonde in a flowered wrapper, and was decorated with pictures of the Caudillo in various striking attitudes, and inhabited by young officers who had fought on the winning side in the civil war. While I washed I reflected that this was probably the last place in Spain where the police would think of searching for suspicious foreigners.

Dinner was served at about 10.30, and consisted of watery soup and a dish of soya beans, heaped

around some almost imperceptible flakes of fish. I had discovered at the frontier town of Port-Bou that practically every kind of food was rationed; butter, tea, and coffee were unobtainable, meat almost unobtainable, and prices were so high that only the privileged few could buy food in the shops. The bread was black and bitter, but was unrationed since the previous week, a fact which the newspapers insisted on with great pride as a proof of the regeneration of Spain. Soya beans were the staple diet of the country. They had the advantage of producing a speedy effect of satiation but half an hour after the meal one felt hungrier than ever.

Lieutenant Fernandez presented me ceremoniously to the five young officers gathered at the table. All were much bemedalled; one had the empty sleeve of his jacket pinned across his breast, one had lost an eye on the Sierra south of Madrid. They were all politely curious about me . . . What was my nationality? Belgian. (After all, that was what my passport said.) "Where was I going?" To Portugal. "And after that!" To England . . .

Here a perfect hubbub broke out. College French could not stand the strain of expressing what these young men felt about England. I caught the word "Male!" repeated often and fiercely—"Inglaterra—male! male!" and "Gibraltar!", a word charged with hatred. Even to have a visa for England, apparently, was to be suspect of taking the part of that depraved country. Lieutenant Fernandez, called upon to translate, was torn between his ideas of chivalry and his own very venomous feelings about Gibraltar, but got out of it by telling me rather apologetically that the one-armed officer, the youngest and fiercest, was "*muy patriótico*", a hero of the civil

war, with some very special medal given only for the greatest gallantry.

The young man, restored to good temper, smiled widely, and pointed to the cross on his uniform, saying something about loving his country. All the others started to try to explain to me what a great hero he was. They were showing him off to me as though he were some three-star building in Baedeker. Even the crumpled little servant, who had been waiting on us, beamed and patted him on the shoulder, pointing to the military cross and the empty sleeve.

I asked Lieutenant Fernandez: "Do you never talk about anything but your Fatherland? Does nothing else interest you?" and he answered solemnly, "We have all fought and risked our lives to save Spain from revolution. Now we are devoting our lives to building her into a great country as she used to be in the old days. How should anything else interest us?"

I was forgetting now to be careful, and I said: "You have had two years to reconstruct Spain, but the people are still starving. Near the station I saw women searching in the gutters for scraps of food to give their children."

"All that misery is the fault of the Communists. We had to defend our Fatherland and our religion."

"How can you speak of defending your religion when the Germans, whom you must admit to be pagans, are in all your administrations, control half your Press, dictate your foreign policy?"

"No one can dictate to Spain. The Germans helped us in the war when the English tried to hinder us, so we are for the Germans and against the English."

Late that night someone knocked softly at my door. It was the servant who had waited on us at dinner. She

came straight into my room, seized my hand passionately, and said in a low voice, "You must not talk like that. Promise me you will never speak in that way again while you are in Spain. They were saying in Spanish at table that if you were a man they would denounce you. They are all mad. The whole of Spain has gone mad."

She burst into tears. I made her sit down on the bed, and when she was calmer she told me that her husband had fought on the Republican side in the war and escaped into France at the time of Franco's victory. She herself was forced to pretend to be a widow and to work in this pension to save herself from starvation, for the wife of a Republican soldier could get neither employment nor state relief. She talked till dawn, questioning me about France, telling me of the terrible conditions in Barcelona, of the terror and repression and growing unrest.

Next day, after a breakfast of unsweetened *ersatz* coffee and dry black bread, I obtained a ticket for Lisbon and a small sum of money from a Refugee Committee attached to the Belgian Embassy. I called at the pension, and left the price of my room with the porter, then took the evening train to Madrid.

The feeling of oppression in Madrid was even greater than in Barcelona, although both towns had been well tidied up and showed little trace of the bombardments they had undergone two years earlier. It was the day on which the Spanish troops marched into Tangiers, and there were almost hourly demonstrations, speeches, military parades. The occupation of Tangiers was publicized as a great military victory, and the main streets were brilliant with uniforms. The side streets, however, were full of beggars and everyone except soldiers and officials looked half-starved.

That night in the train, on the way to the frontier, I got into conversation with another young officer, a Carlist this time, and therefore of more moderate views than the young Phalangists of Barcelona. I talked to him freely, and began to understand something of the different attitudes of the two parties: the Phalangists intransigent nationalists wholly devoted to the German type of totalitarianism and state-worship, the Carlists Catholic and Monarchist, uneasy over the direction of Spanish policy and the pressure exercised by the Axis. At one time we spoke of the shooting by the Civil Guard of Federico Garcia Lorca, the young and brilliant Spanish poet.

The young officer said: "You are a democrat and you cannot understand the new Spain. It was because Lorca was a genius that we had to kill him. If he had been a simple man he might have been allowed to live, but such a man as that is too dangerous when he is against our ideas."

Next day we reached Portugal, and three weeks later I took ship to England.

IMAGE OF PARIS

THE GROWTH OF A LEGEND

By THOMAS WALTON

I. "TABLEAUX DE PARIS"

"FRENCH SCIENCE, FRENCH art, French literature are in essence the science, the literature, the art of Paris. Paris has an unrivalled collection of great schools, academies, publishing houses. It is the place where great plays, great works of art, great novels, great works of science are produced. The luxury industries of Paris govern the taste and fashion of all France. No other French town has more museums, more libraries, more learned societies, more clubs, unions, centres of discussion, places of entertainment, in a word, more of those social institutions which go to make up that delicate and complicated thing we call a national civilization . . . Paris is the heart and the brain of France."

There, in one short paragraph taken from a French text-book published shortly before the war, was the *fact* of Paris, the creed of Parisian supremacy taught to the school-children of France and firmly rooted in the minds of the great majority of them. But Paris exercised another supremacy, not intellectual but emotional, the proof of which was not to be found in learned treatises sponsored by the Sorbonne, not in exhibitions of paintings or beautiful books, but on the lips of street-singers peddling their ditties at street-corners, teaching the crowds the words and music of songs launched by the high priests and priestesses of Parisian emotion—the stars of Music-Hall.

Mistinguett, all teeth, pink tulle, and million-dollar legs, announcing that

*Paris, c'est une blonde
Qui plaît à tout le monde,*

Maurice Chevalier, with a wink, a "boater", and a cane, declaring

*Paris, je t'aime, je t'aime, je t'aime,
Avec ivresse,
Comme une maîtresse,*

Josephine Baker, black enamelled hair, coffee-coloured limbs, banana skirt replaced by a glittering gown, jittering Charleston abandoned for a langorous melody, confessing

*J'ai deux amours,
Mon pays et Paris,
Par eux toujours
Mon coeur est ravi,*

and Henry Garat—" *il est charmant* "—asserting that

*En parlant un peu de Paris
Tout s'éclaire et tout vous sourit . . .
Son air vous enivre,
On se sent revivre
En parlant un peu de Paris*

all made their contribution to the spreading creed of Paris's emotional attraction, the belief in the existence of a Paris of the imagination, the thought of which brought new life to the man obliged to vegetate in a *trou de province* and added a sparkle to the eye of the Creole dancer. They revealed a Paris endowed with a magnetic personality to which imagination had even attributed human features,

*Le nez retroussé, l'air moqueur,
Les yeux toujours rieurs,*

and all the captivating qualities of a human mistress, a Paris with Sex Appeal.

*Je peux te dire
Qu'avec ton sourire
Tu m'as pris l'âme
Ainsi qu'une femme,*

sang Maurice Chevalier. And the errand-boy who sang the same song as he trundled his tricycle along the Paris streets really meant what he sang. The place of the popular song in the life of a large percentage of the population must never be underestimated. To the popular imagination the words of the more sentimental songs of the moment are just as much "gospel" as words from a church hymn-book. To that French errand-boy Paris really *was* an attractive blonde; she corresponds to a mythological conception of Paris which has at least a century's history behind it.

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Napoleon had said he wanted Paris to become "a city of two, three, four million inhabitants, something fabulous, colossal, something unknown before our time", and the many embellishments he started—the long stretch of the rue de Rivoli, the Arc de Triomphe, the Bourse, the continuation of the Louvre—were carried on and added to by his successors. The July Monarchy, obliged to keep the workers supplied with "*du travail et du pain*", voted enormous sums for the continuation of building work in the capital. After the cholera epidemic of 1831 slums began to be cleared. With the opening of railway stations new arteries were made for the increased traffic in their neighbourhood. Old buildings—Notre Dame, the Sainte Chapelle—were

restored, new ones—the Madeleine, the Panthéon—were completed. Under the Second Empire, with Haussmann as Prefect of the Seine (1853–1870), the beautification of Paris was continued on an even grander scale. Whole districts were destroyed to make room for the spacious avenues and spectacular buildings of a new capital. For twenty years Frenchmen saw a magnificent city, a living organism, developing before their very eyes. Paris rapidly overflowed the line of fortifications built between 1841 and 1845. Twelve arrondissements were increased to twenty when eleven suburban villages were annexed in 1859.

A cartoonist depicted a gigantic Paris covering the whole of France, with an enormous Bourse in the centre. Victor Fournel in *Paris nouveau et Paris futur* (1865) predicted that in 1965 Paris would have a circumference of over a hundred kilometres and would occupy the whole of the Seine Département, a “monstrous cancer . . . with the whole of France for suburbs.” Still, the beauty of urban landscapes was underlined and emphasized more than ever before. The magnificent vistas of the Place de l’Etoile, the Place de la Concorde, the rue Royale, the Avenue de l’Opéra, are only the most obvious of Haussmann’s additions to the beauty of Paris. What is important to remember is that the orgy of destruction and construction which culminated in the work of Haussmann, the mingled regrets for the old Paris and enthusiasm for the new were the material foundation for the legend of the personality of Paris which began in literature, lodged itself firmly in the popular mind and found one of its latest expressions in music-hall song.

There is a direct relationship between Mistinguett’s blonde Paris, Maurice Chevalier’s enchantress, and

Balzac's description of Paris as "*cette grande courtisane qui vous prend et vous laisse, vous sourit et vous tourne le dos avec une égale facilité, . . . une ville qui se montre quasi nue à toute heure; une ville essentiellement courtisane et sans chasteté.*"

The "blonde" motif is only one of the manifestations of the legend of Paris. We propose to examine others: the "mysterious", the "adventurous", the "sentimental" aspects, Paris as a "city for conquest" and, to use the word of another famous blonde, Paris the "devine".

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The interest in the activities, the occult life of Paris did not begin with the overwhelming growth of the city during the nineteenth century. The interest in urban life was already there; the work of the town-planners simply hastened its development. Indeed, one of the landmarks in the history of the personality of Paris, Sébastien Mercier's *Tableau de Paris*, was written before the Revolution (1780-1781).

Sébastien Mercier was one of the tub-thumpers of the literary world. A contemporary drawing represents him as an ass harnessed tail foremost to a barrow loaded with vinegar kegs, trampling on volumes of the Classics and dropping excrement over the great works of Greek and Italian art as he makes his way towards a thistle bed. In art and literature he was an iconoclast as violent as any red-waistcoat Romantic of 1830. The elegant versifying of his contemporaries he heartily despised. "True poetry is bold poetry . . . *Ô combats d'Ossian! ô chants ténébreux de Milton! ô Enfer du Dante! ô Nuits de Young!*" he exclaimed—and conveniently summarized the principal sources of literary inspiration of the 1780's.

The first generation of Romantics was not inspired by cities and city life. Country churchyards, secluded ruins and, especially since *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) had become their guide-book, the Alps, were more conducive to solitary reverie than any possible urban landscape. "Show me men, palaces, houses," wrote J.-P. Brissot, a fervent Rousseauist, in 1780, "and I am merely an ordinary man, petty, impassioned, disappointed in myself. Put me in front of the Alps, their torrents, their seas of ice, their whitened peaks, and I am no longer on the earth; I am far removed from my own body; I am myself!" Speaking for himself, Brissot was really speaking for many of his contemporaries. Even Mercier spent some years (1781-1785) at Neuchatel, scribbling vituperations against the hated Classics and thoroughly enjoying the Alpine prospect. But it was not his indifference to Paris that led him to seek refuge in the mountains. Far from it. His *Tableau de Paris* reveals a feeling for urban existence, for certain aspects of the Capital, which was not to find its full expression before Balzac and Baudelaire. Always abreast of his times, being a journalist at heart, in the *Tableau de Paris* he was well ahead of them.

We are told that he used to keep his reading matter in a heap on the floor of his study, turning it over with a spade until the book he wanted came out on top. Most of his own works seem to have been composed in a similar manner, tossed together with that self-same spade. The *Tableau de Paris* is a typical production—vigorous, occasionally irritating, but formless, discursive, repetitive. To anglicize one of Mercier's own neologisms, it "girandolates", veering dangerously from one topic to another and back again. It is not a guide-book to the

famous buildings and places of interest in the Capital. Mercier makes that clear in his preface. The physical aspect of Paris is to be dealt with only in so far as it illustrates or affects its moral and spiritual manifestations. Yet the book is not intended as a vague generalization applicable to any and every city. According to Mercier, "Paris must be seen, scoured even, its contents examined." So every aspect of Paris is worth recording, from the deafening clatter of the traffic on its avenues to the tapping of a hammer in its meanest street, from a bird's-eye view of the whole city to an account of the posters pasted on its walls, since all contribute something towards a more perfect understanding of one's contemporaries.

Viewed from the towers of Notre Dame, Paris, says Mercier, appears "round, like a pumpkin". The everlasting smoke which rises from its innumerable chimneys hides from sight the tips of its spires; you see a sort of cloud forming above so many houses and are made aware, so to speak, of the perspiration of the city. Mercier's eye, as he viewed the city from Notre Dame, was not focused for a vast panorama, any more than his mind was capable of evolving a profound philosophy. His reflections are superficial, momentary, obvious, and for that reason more interesting for our purpose than the pronouncements of a master thinker. He represents the average lively minded individual in his reactions to the view spread pumpkin-wise around him. He is the spokesman for thousands whose accumulated thoughts can incubate and bring to life a myth.

The moral instability hidden behind outward perfection and the possible horrors of destruction which came to Mercier as he peered down through the smoke

of the Cité chimneys came back to him when he had occasion to visit the geological foundations of Paris. In his chapter on Quarries he points out that the faubourgs of Paris are built over old quarry workings—"hence the awful concavities which are to be found to-day beneath the houses in many districts . . . What food for thought as one contemplates this great city, upheld by means so completely contradictory! These towers, spires, temple vaults—so many signs which say to the eye 'what we are seeing in the air is missing under our feet'." Elsewhere Mercier tells how he visited some disused quarries by going through the cellars of the Observatoire and "can swear that he walked for close on three hours" during which time he saw "a subterranean town, with streets, cross-roads, irregular squares", where the roof was "sometimes high, sometimes low, and when you see the cracks in it and then reflect on what supports the floor of part of this superb town, a secret shudder seizes you and you fear the action of centripetal force".

The "mystery" of Paris is here seen in the making: the "Cities of the Plain" motif—never completely absent from the minds of urban moralists—is beginning to show signs of life. A state of mind is being created in the public; to use a current expression a "war of nerves" is being slowly prepared. The way is being paved for the writers who will open the doll's-house front of 'apparent order' and expose the city's intrigues, lift the trap-doors in its cellars and the gratings in its streets to reveal the activity of its underworld.

Besides a feeling for the mystery of Paris, Mercier's *Tableau* gives occasional glimpses of the poetry of its landscape, or, more precisely, the imaginative appeal of its sights and sounds. "The majestic and charming

street which runs from the Place Louis XV to the Place Royale," giving one the impression of perpetual motion by the number of its passers-by, on horseback and on foot, in cabriolets and coaches, he calls a "magic" street. "The slopes of Passy are crowned with fairy palaces," he says. "The Champs Elysées and the Tuileries are now just one long drive . . . All these beauties strike the coolest imagination." It is stimulating to smell hot felt as one passes the hat-makers, oil and varnish in the paint shops, perfumes and freshly-ground snuff in the tobacconists. There is music in the clanging hammer of the shoe-smith, the biting file of the craftsman, the rolling drums of the Guard, the cries of the street vendors. The strains of itinerant musicians ought to fill every street. "Lying awake in one's bed, it is sweet to hear the ambulant music of the streets—human voices answering each other. The agitation of the soul is calmed when one feels one's self lifted in one's bed by the rapid passage of vehicles shaking the houses." How far removed from the Alpine solitude so dear to his contemporaries ! Mercier seems to have literally vibrated to every beat of the city's rhythm, throughout the day, from sunrise to sunrise. One of his lengthiest chapters, *Les heures du jour*, describes the varying activities of the streets of Paris from 7 a.m. till 6 a.m. on the following day. The picture is a curious one.

The sequence of hours of the day has become a commonplace in the literature of city life. Varying only in certain details, it has been reproduced in prose, verse, pictures up to the present day. Balzac touched upon it more than once, so did Emile Zola. Jules Romains, we shall see, has not entirely ignored it. Amédée Pommier's "humouristic" poem *Paris* treats the theme in great

detail, adapting some points, introducing others, to give a picture of a Parisian day in 1867. *Les Heures Parisiennes* published by Alfred Delvau in 1866, illustrated with etchings by Emile Bénasset, is still another version of the same theme, starting at 3 a.m. in the Halles and going through the whole of the day's activities. Our contemporaries may be more familiar with Cavalcanti's pictorial version of the theme in his film *Rien que les Heures* (1926).

The most attractive of all the *heures de Paris* have always been those early morning hours when the city is beginning to awaken to its daily task, and the description of the streets of Paris at daybreak became rapidly conventionalized. The stock figures of the street-sweeper, the rag-picker, the milk-girl, the workmen starting their day, the reveller finishing his, all appear with the unfailing regularity of the mechanical figures on the clock in Strasbourg cathedral. A drama, *Paris qui s'éveille*, played at the Folies Dramatiques in 1852 opens thus: "A clock in the distance is heard striking five. Street-sweepers of both sexes come in with brooms and buckets swung over their shoulders, the first flush of dawn is seen in the sky. The grocer and the wine-merchant open up their shops. Market porters pass by laden with provisions; a man is seen delivering newspapers, putting them under doors. Masons carrying their tools cross the back of the stage. A milk-woman passes; a baker carrying a huge basket of loaves; maids and menservants are going out shopping." So little does the convention vary that it might equally well have been a stage-direction from Charpentier's opera *Louise*. All the conventions have sprung directly from Mercier's original study of the rhythmic movement of a city's daily life.

Sketches of deeper and broader themes developed by later writers are also to be found in Mercier's *Tableau de Paris*. Politically and morally speaking, this throbbing city with its "magic" streets, its houses like "fairy palaces", is really a monster, "a head too big for the body of the State . . . sucking in money and men, absorbing and encroaching on other towns, *quaerens quem devoret*"; destroying independent provincial life. The attraction of the Capital is a widespread disease, precipitating provincial youth into the 'abyss of corruption'.

"Babylon" though it may be, "enormous melting-pot" in which all the *petites grandeurs* of the provinces come to melt ignominiously away, Paris is the home, the only home, of the man of letters; the only perfect atmosphere for the cultivation of the Arts. It has been said that it was essential to breathe the air of Paris in order to bring any talent to perfection, and indeed "those who have not visited the Capital have rarely excelled in their art", according to Mercier. "The air of Paris must be a special kind of air," he says. In it a budding talent might develop, blossom and bring forth fruit, though it may not be the fine, well-formed fruit that was expected of it. The air of Paris, remember, must be a very special kind of air. "In China," Mercier tells us, "gardeners possess the secret of dwarfing trees of every kind . . . The Pleasures of the Capital are the gardeners of China. They have the secret of dwarfing the strongest, the most vigorous of men." As a kind of afterthought he adds: "Not all, however, but a good many," as if to console those who have not yet felt the first twinges of the shrinking pains.

As a literary critic Mercier may have been the blunder-

ing ass his contemporary proclaimed him ; as an analyst of the Parisian atmosphere his perspicacity is not to be denied. The numerous *Tableaux de Paris*—*petits, nouveaux, mouvants*, and *philosophiques*—which appeared in the years between 1782 and 1800 merely confirm Mercier's popularity and illustrate the growing interest in the city's activity, but add nothing to his original picture. Throughout the nineteenth century *Tableaux de Paris* continued to appear—violent attacks on morals and politics like J.-A. Dulaure's eight-volume *Histoire physique, civile et morale de Paris* (1821-1825)—exhaustive descriptions of the external aspects of Parisian life, from the elegant Champs Elysées to the blood-stained abattoirs, like Edmond Texier's *Tableau de Paris* (1852)—exhausting statistical examinations of the size and number of everything Parisian, from prostitutes to colleges, from policemen to drain-pipes, like Maxime Ducamp's *Paris, ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie* (1869)—dazzling pictorial reminders of the beauty of the World's new capital like the three folio volumes of drawings and lithographs, *Paris dans sa splendeur*, published by Henri Charpentier in 1861.

Besides these works by individual authors, many enormous composite volumes were published during the century, such as the famous *Livre des Cent-et-Un*, fifteen volumes of essays on Parisian life by a hundred-and-one famous writers, printed in 1832-1833 to save the bookseller Ladvocat from bankruptcy, or *La Grande Ville, nouveau tableau de Paris, comique, critique et philosophique* (1844), illustrated by Gavarni, Daumier, Henri Monnier, etc. *Le Diable à Paris* (1845) and *Paris et les Parisiens* (1856) are similar volumes. All emphasize the startling diversity of Parisian life, of which only the myth of

Proteus, according to Texier, can give a perfect idea, for Paris is "fabulous as mythology and variable as the atmosphere". All show that the belief in the supremacy of Paris was rapidly spreading, being readily accepted. Paris, its people, its atmosphere, its attraction, was good "copy"; people were interested in it, they were even thrilled by it. Little wonder, then, that towards the end of the nineteenth century one of the foremost Parisian journalists, Edouard Drumont, could confess that "Paris is behind all my thoughts, it is actually a part of my very being, but I do not know how to express the way I see it in my mind's eye. I simply have to sit for a moment, smoke a cigarette, close my eyes, and I see blocks of houses, shop fronts, bridges, at certain hours of the day. I see their landscapes, their perspective, I see street-corners, exactly, as they really are—and that plunges me deep in ideas, gradually carries me completely away, far from all shores, to the open sea, into infinite distance."

Had not Victor Hugo emphatically stated in his preface to *Paris-Guide*, written for the great exhibition of 1867: "*Il faut l'admirer, il faut la vouloir, il faut la subir, cette ville frivole, légère, chantante, dansante, fardée, fleurie, redoutable, qui, nous l'avons dit, à qui la prend donne puissance*"? Paris, "the pivot city on which, one day, history turned," was launched, established as the greatest thrill in the world.

APHRA DRAWS OFF A SCENE

By RICHARD SOUTHERN

ONE CAN NEVER be quite certain, in any printed edition of a previously acted play, how much of the stage directions is owing to the technique of the author and how much has been imported from some stage manager's initiative at the occasion of the first showing.

But I think a broad view of the work of that surprising lady, Aphra Behn, will suggest that she had a deep enough knowledge of theatrical technique for us to ascribe her stage directions largely to herself.

This woman of the seventeenth century wrote many plays, and she did not write them as a literateur, intent only on character and plot, she wrote as a lively and inventive person of the theatre. She was always ready to exploit the theatrical medium to the full and write in terms of the stage of her time, with its novel and remarkable conventions, making as much use of them as she might.

And so her stage directions teach us a great deal about those conventions—and often a great deal that is surprising.

We must not forget that when she wrote, the theatre and these same conventions of theatrical presentation had been newly born scarcely a decade before. This theatrical art was but ten years old. Perhaps this point is worth expanding.

The public theatre of England, up to that cataclysm which transformed the land when they cut the King's head off, was an affair of a platform in a courtyard. It is true that this platform, and its backing, reached in

Elizabeth's time a considerable complexity of development. But (very broadly speaking) the show was still an action of costumed players upon a platform.

But after the silent period of the Commonwealth, and when the King came back, in 1660, an entirely different chapter opened.

One certain man, practised and adept in a particular form of private theatricals, brought in to the public theatre at the restoration of the Monarchy an idea which, to it, was entirely new. He presented the costumed players against *full scenery*. And that entailed the creation of a new form of stage and a new kind of building to house it and, as well, a new kind of play-writing.

That man was Sir William Davenant, and his theatre, the Duke's Theatre, Dorset Garden, 1671.

In so brief an essay—which is, moreover, about Aphra Behn's stage directions, not about Davenant—we have to pass over many details, as for instance the nebulous and intriguing hints of primitive scenery earlier, in certain so-called private theatres before the Commonwealth, and also Davenant's own first experiments in his adapted theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields (1661). But the main points are that Dorset Garden Theatre (though it was Davenant's second house, and opened after his death) was the great new theatre built especially on the new lines for great spectacular *scenic* shows—a new (and often bitterly opposed) development of drama. It was the first avowed theatre of its kind in Britain. And at this theatre, in 1678, seven years after it was built, there was produced Mrs. Aphra Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy*.

I want now to list the scene directions in this play of

her's and point out what she teaches us through them of her new theatre and its scenery, and the novel technique they imposed upon the shows.

The directions relating to the third act alone will suffice my purpose. Summarized, and mostly in modern parlance, here they are :—

- Act III, s. 1. "The Scene draws off to a Room in Sir Patient Fancy's House and discovers" Lady Knowell and others.
- s. 2. A room in Lady Knowell's House.
- s. 3. A Garden.
- s. 4. A Chamber, Lady Fancy discovered in her nightgown.
- s. 5. A Garden.
- s. 6. Lady Fancy's Antechamber.
- s. 7. Lady Fancy's Bedchamber (discovers her as before, and Lodowick "as just risen in disorder from the Bed").
- s. 8. "The Scene draws over Sir Patient and Lady; draws again and discovers Scene viii, The Garden," characters are discovered.
- s. 9. "Changes to the long Street, a Pageant of an Elephant coming from the farther end with Sir Credulous on it."

For scenes 1, 8, and 9 I have gone beyond the brevity of a scene plot to quote the actual words of the printed script, because of their great significance.

And straightway we tackle the first phrase of these fascinating seventeenth-century sentences—*The Scene draws off*.

We ask—

What scene?

What does "drawing off" mean?

The scene that drew was the last scene of the previous act, which (and here is our first point) had, after the

custom of those days, remained visible on the empty stage through the act-interval.

This scene "drew". Now, all through, from Pope to Dickens, we find mysterious hints at the surprising meaning of this remarkable verb. Pope says of contemporary stage pageants that—

Back fly the scenes, and enter foot and horse.

And Dickens gibes gently at those stage troopers—

who may be generally observed to linger in the enemy's camp after the open country, held by the opposite forces, has been split up the middle by a convulsion of Nature.

All three—Mrs. Behn, Pope, and Dickens—refer to the fact that the scene parted up the centre and each half slid sideways till it was out of sight behind the wings.

Thus all early scenes changed. And the remarkable thing is that, though the method seems so strange to us, it persisted even to within a long living memory.

And the still more remarkable thing is that this sliding back or sliding forward of the halves of the scenes took place under the eyes of the audience. It was not hidden by a curtain.

But there is material here for many a digression. We must return to Aphra's stage directions.

Upon the *drawing* of this last scene of the previous act, a new scene was evidently disclosed behind, and certain characters were discovered before that scene.

And here, to make clear the important significance of these *discovered* characters, we have to turn and plunge deeper still into the mysteries of the stage.

When that innovating architect, Inigo Jones, turned

his vivid and forceful personality (too forceful to please Ben Jonson) to the scenery of King James's Court Masques he brought in, in 1615, a scenic system, the first of its sort in England, wherein the stage had three or four pairs of wings at the sides, and, at the back, a device he called *shutters*. These were, for our purpose the same thing as Aphra Behn's drawing scenes. They were back scenes parting in the middle.

There were two or three of them, and these pairs of shutters were all in one place, close together towards the back of the stage. It is important to note that they were close together. There was but a matter of an inch or two between each of these back scenes.

Now when we turn to *Sir Patient Fancy* we see the significance of this *discovery* of persons when the scene draws. For clearly there must have been a considerable space—at least a distance of feet—between this scene that opened and the scene it disclosed behind of Sir Patient Fancy's room, the first scene of the new act. Without such a space there would have been no room for the group of characters to have stationed themselves ready for discovery.

Let us at this point rule, in imagination, a line upon a piece of paper to represent the scene that drew, that is to say, the last scene of act 2 and, a little above it, another to represent the scene behind that was revealed, that is the scene for act 3, scene 1, leaving enough space between for three or four people to stand.

The next scene makes no mention of the discovery of any people. It shows a room in Lady Knowell's house. It might have closed over in front of the last, or the last might have opened to disclose it. And similarly for scene 3; the Garden. There is no actual factor apparent

at first to forbid our supposing that these three scenes were close together like Jones's shutters. But after careful consideration of the whole scheme of the act, when we have reached the end, we shall find only one arrangement that adequately suits the procession of the scenes. For the moment let us go on.

In scene 4 we have another discovery. The Garden opens and discloses not only Lady Fancy's Room, but Lady Fancy as well, and in her nightgown.

And scenes 5 and 6 appear simple once more, they show a Garden, and Lady Fancy's Antechamber respectively.

But scene 7 has a discovery again. It shows the Bedroom with "Lodowick as just risen in disorder from the Bed". A sensation maybe. Yes, but the sensation to us is that it seems that here we must suppose a four-poster bed on the stage, and hence enough space between the scenes to stand it.

But after this scene we have a fresh problem. "The scene" (we are not told what scene) "draws over", concealing the bed and two characters as it does so, but thereafter the play does not go on, as we have supposed in all earlier cases, with the entrance of actors and the resumption of the story. No, here this unspecified scene, after a pause, *draws again*, opening to disclose scene 8, which is another Garden, with characters discovered. Nothing happens before this momentarily drawn scene. What was it? What was it for?

Upon careful examination we find the most likely reason is the simple one that there is a limit to the depth of any stage. You cannot go on opening scenes and disclosing others far enough behind to allow the discovery of groups of characters and four-poster beds

in between, to an indefinite extent. Somewhere you come to the back wall of the building.

And so here must Aphra Behn have done. Her big bed scene reached up to the back of the stage—or at least to the back of that part of the stage which was provided with means for moving these bi-partite scenes. She could go no farther. And yet she had another problem. She wanted her next scene (scene 8, the Garden) to begin with the discovery of three characters, and she could not, in any case, just station it and them behind the bedroom wall and open it, even had she the room—for *she would have left the bed in the middle of the lawn!*

What does she do? She simply “closes the bedroom door”. That is to say, she draws a scene over the bedroom and the characters left in it, and hides all.

And having recognized this we may guess at once which scene it was she drew—surely the scene from scene 6, Lady Fancy’s Antechamber, which would logically be outside her bedroom, and which was already in position in front to close.

Then, having shut the bedroom from sight, she could have the bed removed, the garden group posed, the back scene opened to show the Garden, an inch or two behind it, and all was then ready for the antechamber scene to be drawn off again and the show to proceed. And thus she circumnavigated the apparent impossibility of having two, deep, discovery scenes in succession.

But we are not at the end of this notable lady’s resources yet.

She is right at the back of the stage now. Yet she has her greatest effect to come, in the final scene of her act. She wants the length of a street behind her garden. And a street with “an Elephant coming from the

farther end". (Note the splendid gesture of *farther* end; no niggling pageant here, turning a corner into sight and pretending it had marched a mile !)

And with this problem we come at last to that only occasion in Restoration theatre technique where the shutter-like, bi-partite, back scene was not used. This, *the long street* (note the technical adjective and the specific article) was set in a sort of alcove off the back of the stage proper, behind the province of wings and back scenes, away in the distance behind all, where usually scene-packs stood and which was now, for the nonce, cleared and opened up for the rare and special effect of a *long* scene, reaching to the "farther end" of the theatre.

So Aphra Behn reached her climax.

And now if we turn to our sketch plan and seek to complete it, we shall find no adequate way of enabling just such a succession of scenes and discoveries to have been presented in just the way her directions tell, save the following:—

Just in front, and at either end, of the line we drew for the last scene of act 2, we may make a pair of short parallel lines to represent the pair of side wings at the front of the stage. Behind them is already shown our line representing the last scene of act 2. Directly above this we must indicate act 3, s. 2, Lady Knowell's Room, with a similar line; then we leave a space and, behind, draw a second pair of wings just fronting the line already drawn for act 3, s. 1, Sir Patient's Room. Immediately behind this scene fits the Garden of scenes 3 and 5. Then a space and, behind, the third set of wings fronting the scene for Lady Fancy's Room. Then the fourth and last set of wings and, directly behind, firstly

Lady Fancy's Bedroom and, close behind, the s. 8, the Garden—for which we note we must use different scenery from that for the earlier gardens, since the latter was so placed as to prevent our having a discovery in front of it, being close behind Sir Patient's Room.

And finally, to cap it all, we draw the top and sides of a square at a little distance behind the last scene and we thus have represented the alcove at the back of the stage wherein the pieces of the street were set up.

And now Aphra Behn has taught us much concerning the disposition of early Restoration stage scenery. There were at least four pairs of wings. There were means (and here is a notable development on Inigo Jones) of *drawing scenes* behind *any* of these wings, that is to say not only at the back but also in regions intermediate, and at the front of the stage. At least two sets of scenes could be drawn at each wing position. Discoveries were frequent. Ingenuities had to be practised sometimes to achieve them. Much play could be had with the scenery as well as with the actors. And finally there was always up one's sleeve, to be cherished and only occasionally indulged in, that sensation, that special effect, that culminating splendour, the *long scene* that reached to the farther end of the theatre, a succession of cut-out pieces, vanishing into distance as far, it appeared, as the straining eye could reach.

HARRY, MEET MR. PRUFROCK

(T. S. Eliot's Dilemma)

By WM. MONTGOMERIE

In my beginning is my end . . .

In my end is my beginning.

East Coker.

THE FIRST POEM of T. S. Eliot's *Collected Poems* (1909-1935) is called *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. There are a number of echoes in the poem from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, references which can be used to analyse the poem, and to psycho-analyse the poet behind the poem. Mr. Eliot has himself encouraged this kind of analysis by inserting literary echoes in his work, quite deliberately. If such echoes, unconscious or not, are put to use by the critic for another purpose, his justification is to be found in the fact that by using these clues the critic is able to penetrate further into the poems than he can do by neglecting their aid.

Mr. Eliot has also written an essay on *Hamlet*, called *Hamlet and his Problems*. His point of view is fairly summed up in the phrase that *Hamlet* is "the Mona Lisa of Literature". The essay is merely an embellishment of this theme. Now the Mona Lisa is an unanswerable question to those who do not know what the question is. Unless a question is asked there can be no answer. What is the question in the Mona Lisa? What is the question in *Hamlet*?

The second question enters the first paragraph of *The Love Song* :

Streets that follow like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent

To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .

Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"

The question can be formulated, and answered, though the poet cannot or dare not.

There will be time, there will be time
 To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet ;
 There will be time to murder and create,
 And time for all the works and days of hands
 That lift and drop a question on your plate ;
 Time for you and time for me,
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
 And for a hundred visions and revisions,
 . . .

Prufrock must prepare a face to meet society. It is a society that he fears, for the question that he dare not ask is a social question. The faces that he meets disapprove, so he does not ask the question. That it is a bigger question than a proposal of marriage, as suggested by the title of the poem, is clear from the language even of the above quotation. In *Hamlet* too, there are murder, visions, and revisions.

Do I dare
 Disturb the universe ?
 In a minute there is time
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

We are taken back to the astrological attitude to the universe and human affairs which is so typical of Shakespeare. It is best expressed in Ulysses' speech in *Troilus and Cressida* :

The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
 Observe degree, priority and place,
 Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
 Office and custom, in all line of order ;
 And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
 In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
 Amidst the other ; whose medicinable eye
 Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,

And posts, like the commandment of a king,
Sans check to good and bad : but when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents ! what mutiny !

This is of course the question in *Hamlet*. It is a question of mutiny which, in these days of potential revolution, should be a phenomenon quite familiar. We cease to understand mutiny or revolution when we forget Burke's aphorism, "The people have no interest in disorder." We imagine ourselves so much in sympathy with Hamlet, whose father has been murdered by Claudius, that we lose sight of the social aspect of the problem, that Hamlet is a potential mutineer. Looking at the individuals, we may take one side, and yet be on the other side in so far as we see the problem as a social one. Many Scotsmen, and some Englishmen, think of the 1745 rebellion in terms of George II and "Bonnie Prince Charlie". Of course, our sympathies are with the Young Pretender. In the same way as we are interested in him, we are interested in Prince Hamlet. He is one of Shakespeare's most fascinating creations, and we treat him as indulgently as we treat Prince Charles Edward. But from the social aspect, our sympathies are with King Claudius, King George II, and law and order.

Mr. Eliot does not bring the problem fully into consciousness.

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas,

says Prufrock, echoing the thought in *Hamlet*, "all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am, if like a crab

you could go backward " (ii, 2, 200-3). Thus, Prufrock seems to be Polonius, at least at this point, where both Prufrock and Polonius are crabs, or the same crab. This crab turns up again a few poems later in *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*, after the mention of the cat, an animal armoured from the human world much like a crab. The cat becomes a child, behind whose eyes the poet cannot penetrate, then the obstruction becomes lighted shutters through which eyes in the street try to peer,

And a crab one afternoon in a pool,
An old crab with barnacles on his back,
Gripped the end of the stick which I held him.

Here the crab is projected, and seems to be outside the writer. It is the child whose nature the poet cannot penetrate. It is also the poet, armoured from the outside world "Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows", and "the damp souls of housemaids Sprouting despondently at area gates", outside his own private world where, as Prufrock confesses, "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons."

In *The Love Song* there is a reference to

Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all—

which cannot be completely appreciated if we confine ourselves to the biblical story. It is also an echo of Hamlet's dying speech,

Had I but time (as this fell Sergeant Death
Is strict in his arrest) O I could tell you.
But let it be : Horatio, I am dead,
Thou liv'st, report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

(V, 2, 328-332.)

It is the task of the critic of *Hamlet* to be Horatio, at least in this respect.

"It is impossible to say just what I mean!" exclaims Prufrock, and then he says it. If he had not said just what he does say in the next few lines, all the comparisons drawn in the first part of this analysis might have been unconvincing or accidental. But they are not all accidental. For Prufrock continues:

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise a prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost at times, the Fool.

"These tedious old fools," exclaims Hamlet after his interview with Polonius. And he uses the same description of the old man when speaking to the old man's daughter, Ophelia, "Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house" (iii, 1, 132-3). A point that escapes Mr. Eliot here is that the fool in *Hamlet* is—Hamlet; but a fool in the Shakespearian definition, "He uses his folly like a stalking-horse and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit" (*As You Like It*, V, 4, 100-1).

In the Shakespearian tragedy, Polonius is the ally of King Claudius, and Prufrock in choosing not to be Prince Hamlet, is expressing this resistance to identification with Hamlet. It is a return to the point of view of King Claudius and Polonius. "Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd" (V, 2, 230), but there is the other faction, the faction of the fathers, stepfathers, uncles, all those who are in a position of authority over their sons,

stepsons, and nephews. Prufrock has chosen his faction. The evidence for not identifying T. S. Eliot with Prufrock, in this decision, is not very strong.

There is a close similarity between Goethe's approach to *Hamlet* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, bk. 5, chap. 4, etc.), and that of Mr. Eliot, at least in certain essentials. At one point, the criticism of the two men coincides exactly, and it is this coincidence that is important.

According to Goethe, in *Wilhelm Meister*, Shakespeare was "perhaps misled by the novels, which furnished him with his materials" (Carlyle's translation). According to Mr. Eliot, "the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare will appear very differently if, instead of treating the whole action of the play as due to Shakespeare's design, we perceive his *Hamlet* to be superimposed upon much cruder material which persists even in the final form". The argument used in both cases to support similar arguments charges Shakespeare, though not directly, with incompetence.

The criticism of Goethe and of Mr. Eliot coincides exactly at one vital point, and that is in their desire to remove from the play the scenes which are perhaps the best clues to its meaning, because in these scenes the motive is purest in expression. "And finally," writes Mr. Eliot, "there are unexplained scenes—the Polonius-Laertes and the Polonius-Reynaldo scenes—for which there is little excuse; these scenes are not in the verse style of Kyd, and not beyond doubt in the style of Shakespeare." No further details are given. Goethe agrees about the necessity of removing these scenes, and others. Shakespeare's workmanship is questioned in a self-contradictory sentence, "Of all the plays it is the longest and is possibly the one on which Shakespeare spent most pains; and yet he has left in it superfluous

and inconsistent scenes which even hasty revision should have noticed." If it is the play on which Shakespeare spent most pains then surely he could not have left in superfluous and inconsistent scenes. The revision must have been very thorough, which is the case. It is one of the most skilfully constructed of Shakespeare's plays, because of its condensation.

The justification for the seemingly superfluous scenes is that they repeat, with modifications, one essential aspect of the main plot, and show by this the importance of this aspect. It is a theme that occurs three times in *Hamlet*. It is firstly that of the relations between Hamlet and his uncle-stepfather. It is the relation of Laertes to his father Polonius. It is the relation of Fortinbras to his uncle the King of Norway. The theme is repeated without feminine complications, which have upset many critics, in the episode of Fortinbras and his "usurping" uncle. The seemingly superfluous scenes are both a reflection and a correction of the central theme of the main plot.

"Hamlet's bafflement" and "the bafflement of his creator" are really the bafflement of Mr. Eliot. It can be shown that in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare solves the problem he set himself, and that Hamlet solves his problem. It can also be shown that Mr. Eliot, when he tackles a similar problem, does not solve it.

It has already been noticed how Goethe's approach to certain questions in *Hamlet* is the same as that of Mr. Eliot. There is another parallel which seems so far to have been missed, even by those who have noticed the beginning of the poem.

It is Goethe's poem called *Hegire*, out of his *Westöstlicher Divan*. The Hegire was Mahomet's flight out of

Mecca, which mirrors Goethe's mental escape to the East out of the European disturbances of 1813-14. It is a typical phenomenon during times of crisis, when the poets—or some of them—make mental and even physical escapes, as they have done recently, to various geographical and mental countries.

Nord und West und Süd zersplittern,
 Throne bersten, Reiche zittern :
 Flüchte du, im reinen Osten
 Patriarchenluft zu kosten !
 Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen
 Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen.
 Dort, im Reinen und im Rechten,
 Will ich menschlichen Geschlechtern
 In des Ursprungs Tiefe dringen,
 Wo sie noch von Gott empfangen
 Himmelslehr' in Erdesprachen
 Und sich nicht den Kopf zerbrachen ;
 Wo sie Väter hoch verehrten,

...

Where they highly honoured their fathers !

It is now necessary, to complete the thesis, to show that Mr. Eliot's failure to force the solution of *Hamlet* into complete consciousness, either in Prufrock or in his essay on *Hamlet*, that is either in his early poetry or criticism, leads inevitably to his bafflement in face of the same problem in his later work.

Family Reunion was played and published in 1939. There are references to the family in *The Rock*, but the whole play, *Family Reunion*, is about a family. The significance of this fact is that Mr. Eliot is gradually, in his work, defining his attitude in the three spheres which we call the spiritual, the social or political, and the domestic. We usually see this third domestic sphere in

relation to the social and spiritual. Thus, the conservative who seems to be concerned about the preservation of capitalism, or to be defining his attitude to some form of aristocracy, puts his argument into the short formula, "For God and the Family."

The story of the play, *Family Reunion*, which is a domestic play, and a religious play, with obscured political implications, is this—

Amy, Dowager Lady Monchensey, her three younger sisters, Ivy, Violet, and Agatha, along with Gerald and Charles, two brothers of her deceased husband, are waiting for the return of her three sons, but chiefly for the return of her son Harry, Lord Monchensey. The choice of this aristocratic family, and the scene in the north of England country house, seem to be reactionary in both respects, from the middle-class scenes of his earlier poems, and from London. It is a significant tendency in Mr. Eliot's development.

During Harry's absence, his mother has been keeping the house as much as possible in the state it was when her son left. Her plan is that on his return he will take command at Wishwood. We learn that Harry has lost his wife at sea. She has fallen overboard and been drowned. The source of our information is the gathering of the older generation awaiting the return of the heir. They are very conventional people, and only slightly understand what is happening in the play. Soon after Harry's return he confesses that he murdered his wife by pushing her overboard.

There gradually emerges from the dialogue, knowledge that three women (or four, if we include Mary the girl his mother intended him to marry) had been fighting for control of Harry. His mother, who is the head of the

family, has her plans for him. She intends to hand over the house to him, so that he takes control for the sake of the future. Mr. Eliot prefers the past. Harry seems to have escaped his mother by marrying another woman than the woman his mother had planned he should marry. But in escaping the influence of his mother he had put himself in the power of his wife, and to escape this second woman he had impulsively murdered her by pushing her overboard. His return home is to a house where the first woman, his mother, is awaiting him with her plans. On the day of his return he decides to go away again. Agatha, his mother's youngest sister, helps him to come to this decision. Thirty-five years before, she had taken her sister's husband, Harry's father, and she now steals Harry from his mother. Harry's departure kills his mother.

Now, this death of Harry's mother is really more important in the play than the murder of Harry's wife. The murder of the wife is secondary, a blow struck at his mother indirectly. Harry's murder of his wife is an admission of weakness, a cowardly way of getting rid of a woman he cannot overcome by strength of character. Running away from his mother is the same phenomenon, and is the direct cause of her death. In both cases it is Harry's weakness in relation to wife and mother which leads to the death of wife and mother. This weakness has been inherited from his father, whom Harry resembles, in the opinion of Dr. Warburton. As Agatha says a few pages later (p. 101):—

Where he was weak he recognized your mother's power,
And yielded to it.

. . .

You see your mother as identified with this house—

It was not always so. There were many years
Before she succeeded in making terms with Wishwood,
Until she took your father's place, and reached the point where
Wishwood supported her, and she supported Wishwood.

Harry's mother then had taken his father's place, just as Harry's wife had taken the place of Harry's mother. If we go beyond Harry's wife to his mother, and beyond his mother to his father, we reach the true situation. In a normal family, Harry's father would be the individual in whom would be found the authority over the family, including Harry. This family would have been related normally to the mother instead of the abnormal relations found in the play. As the mother says:—

Seven years I kept him,
For the sake of the future, a discontented ghost,
In his own house. What of the humiliation,
Of the chilly pretences in the silent bedroom,
Forcing sons upon an unwilling father?
Dare you think what that does to one? Try to think of it.
(p. 117.)

The situation is abnormal, and can only be understood if "the crooked be made straight", and the real problem seen. The real domestic, social, and religious problem can only be worked out in the case of a normal family, or by placing the abnormal family against the background of a normal family, as Shakespeare might have done by the use of a sub-plot. By treating the case of an abnormal family, Mr. Eliot loses the possibility of a general solution of a more universal problem. His play becomes an attempt at a personal solution of an abnormal problem with a very restricted appeal to the few who understand what he is trying to do. The majority will merely find much of the play incomprehensible. Mr. Eliot sees this

difficulty, and protects himself beforehand by putting into his play, as a chorus, the uncles and aunts who do not understand what is happening. They symbolize the majority of his potential audience, few of whom will admit that they are caricatured in this chorus. But such an admission is the first step to a possible understanding of the play. Rather than that, they will assume a knowledge they do not possess, in order to feel themselves as clever as Mr. Eliot. By doing this, of course, they fall into a trap, and the poet remains one degree cleverer than they are. Mr. Eliot is so honest that it is difficult to believe that this is fully conscious.

Actually, Harry fails to solve his problem; he runs away from it. His attempts to prove that in running away he is not running away, but that it is those who remain at Wishwood who are really running away, are again very clever, but to anyone courageous enough to admit his own doubts, not very convincing. That this running away should be given a religious character does not alter the truth.

"I must follow the bright angels" is a funny remark for a murderer, trying to justify himself for leaving home, where his problem has always been and, at the end of the play, still remains unsolved. After all, a murder is not a personal problem only, as it is shown to be in *Family Reunion*; it is also a social problem. By murdering his wife, and by running away from home (and killing his mother) Harry repudiates the family. Actually, he does not do so, because he takes with him his title, and the income derived from the family. It is certainly an abnormal family, but Mr. Eliot's failure is that he does not relate the abnormal situation at Wishwood to normality. By repudiating the social solution of murder

—if it is a solution—his only alternative is a religious individualism, Harry's attempt to save his own soul. That the poet sees the social implications of murder is shown by the fact that a policeman does appear in the play and flusters Harry, but in a play full of symbolism, Sergeant Winchell is much less than a symbol of law and order. He is merely an individual.

Mr. Eliot's attitude to the family is obscured by something, possibly a personal problem, and he seems to repudiate this institution, to become a religious individualist. "I am myself alone," says Gloucester in *III Henry VI* (V, 6, 83), but later, when in *King Richard III* (V, 3, 191) he exclaims, "I am a villain," the two statements are for Shakespeare synonymous. The determination of Coriolanus to stand, "As if a man were author of himself And knew no other kin" (V, 3, 37) is an attitude that Coriolanus lives to repent of.

We have reached a contradiction in Mr. Eliot's thought. He may obscure the contradiction in vague, and therefore false, mysticism, and there are traces of such a development in his latest work.

In *East Coker*, published in September, 1940, Mr. Eliot seems, at the age of fifty-two, to be disillusioned about old age :

Do not let me hear
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.

(p. 10.)

It may be that Mr. Eliot, having begun as an old man (Prufrock-Polonius) may be compelled to end as a young man. It might lead to a solution of the dilemma into which he has brought himself in his later work, if he

reconsiders the decision made by Prufrock in his first poem, "No ! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be." For reasons which he as a royalist ought to understand, Hamlet is destroyed, not for killing the King, but merely for threatening to do so. Hamlet's destruction precedes the death of King Claudius. But King Claudius is, as his mother is to Harry, a substitute for Prince Hamlet's father.

Harry, in *Family Reunion*, kills his wife who, as we have seen, is a substitute for his mother, and then kills his mother who is a substitute for his father. The situation seems to be the same in *Hamlet*, but is essentially the opposite. It is Harry's decision to leave home which kills his mother. It is Hamlet's decision to return home, where his problem is, that leads firstly to his own death, and secondly to the death of the King. But Hamlet's return home rounds him off as one of the great characters in literature. Harry's departure from home leaves his problem at home unsolved.

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened

...

POETRY

THE SACRED ORDER

NEVER FORGET THIS when the talk is clever :
Michelet suffered chaos in his bone
To bring to clarity the history of France.
His life-blood flowed into old documents.
The scholar at his desk burned like a lover.

At century's end behold the sceptic rules,
Doubt like Napoleon's servants seals
The visionary books. The scholar's passion,
His burning heart are wholly out of fashion :
The human spirit goes, the caste prevails.

Urbane and foxy, the professors shut
Up Michelet in his coffin and abandon
To etymologists the wild and living truth
To pin down in their books like any moth :
The mandarins come in, the men go out.

Historian and critic now are safely one.
Art is in history and history is error
Which the enlightened scientific eyes
Can put under the microscope and analyse :
Bright Shelley can be seen quite plain by anyone.

Now is detachment the supreme holy word
(Above all take no part nor risk your head)
Forgotten are Erasmus' passionate pilgrimages
By these who fabricate and love their cages :
Has truth then never buckled on a sword ?

Never forget this when the talk is clever :
Wisdom must be born in the flesh or wither,
And sacred order has been always won
From chaos by some burning faithful one
Whose human bones have ached as if with fever

To bring you to these high triumphant places.
Forget the formulas, remember men.
Praise scholars, for their never-ending story
Is written out in fire and this is their glory :
Read faith as on a lover's in their faces.

MAY SARTON

ROCKPORT.

August, 1941.

VISIONS I

THE SPIDER IN the moss
Spins its tortuous affairs
Quadrant superposed on cross
Eking out the years.

Backed by the hollow night
The cross-grained gallows stands,
Foreshadowing the sight
Of bones beneath the sands.

The sockets of his eyes
Are highways for the ants,
Fumes from the embers rise
Of dark forbidden plants.

This is the voice of doom
Swaying the leafless trees
Heard in an empty room
When the footsteps cease.

J. B. SIDGWICK

VISIONS III

ACROSS ANHYDROUS PLAINS no clouds pile high
Save those of ochreous dust: never again
Out of the aeon-old past will water spout
From slategrey masses in a tearing sky.

Dust-grit and death-dust swirl the land,
Lashes of scorn. Bank up, smother the last
Gaunt vestiges, stark structures thrown against
The foreseen end, scoured by the biting sand.

J. B. SIDGWICK

THE COW

By GEORGE EWART EVANS¹

I WAS THIRTEEN when they decided to sell the cow. At first I was glad. I'd had enough of that cow : I'd fetched and carried for her ; I'd minded her and searched for her ; as much a slave to her as if I'd been tied to her tail. And it wasn't only that. Whenever she walked down the street, as I brought her home, she wasn't happy unless she was splaying her feet and swinging her big udder in the middle of the road, with a couple of lorries cursing behind her. The time she got loose and ate up Watkins the Teacher's spring cabbages ! And I had to take a pint of milk to him for a month to pay him back ! Every time I climbed to his house, halfway up the mountain, I cursed thorns and thistles on the old cow. Then there was the time when we lost her for the whole day. Dan-the-Milk told us where she was : up at Tydu Farm, bellowing the roof off the barn. Old Roderick the Farmer came to meet me :

Bulling she is, lad. Is she ?

I was never more ashamed of Betsy than on that day.

But I was a bit proud of that old cow as well. Especially when an old woman would stop me on the road and say :

There's a fine cow she is. Whose is it, bach ? Good milk ?

Ay, I'd say, Lovely milk. None to spare though.

Then, when I'd take a butty along with me to find her, he'd say :

There's a big bag she's got. How much milk does she give ?

Oh, about fourteen gallons. Seven in the morning

¹ Previously appeared in Nos. 22, 29, 31, 48.

and seven at night. Maybe eight, when she's had good grass.

There's a milker for you. If you were to sell her—pretend, now—how much would you get for her?

Four hundred pounds, no doubt.

I was sad when my father went to see the butcher. The cow was a side line. We were a big family and we kept her for milk; but the old man fell on lean days so he thought to make a bit on her. But the butcher wouldn't look at her:

She's too old, Dafydd Thomas. She's good for milk, but not for beef. My customers would want new teeth. Tell you what, mun. Take her up to the market, to Pont-Shon-Isaac. She'll make a bit, no doubt. I'll have a word with Phillips Auctioneer, myself.

So on Tuesday I put on my breeches with the man's pockets in the front and my leggings, to walk Betsy up to Pont-Shon-Isaac, a couple of miles up the valley. We set off early in the morning, Betsy, me, and our Dai, a young 'un. He howled blue murder until they let him go with us. I had my hazel stick that I'd cut special, the day before, and our Dai had a piece of bamboo we cut on the sly, off the arm-chair in the kitchen.

Betsy had a halter; and she didn't like it. So after we got going on the road a bit we took it off, and Dai tied it round him, like a cowboy's lasso. We were going a bit slow, because Betsy hadn't been milked that morning, to make her udder look bigger; but she came along as calm as milk itself. It was our Dai who caused the trouble. He kept asking all the time if we'd have the money to come home with. He'd set his mind on buying spanish in Pont-Shon-Isaac.

The last part of the journey we did pretty quick,

because when we got near the market, a float with a couple of calves under a net passed us, and Betsy must try and gallop after these ; with Dai and me panting behind her.

The market was in a big field with a zinc fence around it and we felt a bit lost when we got inside. There were cattle and sheep, and pigs and goats—all the animals you'd see in a farmyard ; and a few more besides : like Phillips the Auctioneer, who was like a big bull ; if a bull drinks whisky so as to get himself so red in the face that you'd think he'd burn up while you were looking at him.

It was easy to pick out Phillips. He was standing by a bit of an office, talking to a short man with a twisted walking stick. We went up to him, and I said straight-way :

We brought the cow.

He looked down at Dai and me, as if we were two terriers, and cocked his eye over to where Betsy was rubbing noses with a young bullock. He winked at the man he was talking to.

The cow ! Where is she ?

Over by there, said Dai, speaking up quite excited. That fine Her'ford.

Oh, over there. Let's have a look at this fine Hereford.

Phillips strolled over with the other fellow, whose face was all creased up, like a washing board, with grinning.

Father said Mr. Leyshon would see you about her, I said speaking up importantly.

That's all right, bach. Give much milk ? He nodded his head towards Betsy.

Buckets and buckets, said our Dai, chipping in.

Yields about four gallons, I said, looking at Dai hard.

Oh, she's not a bad milker, eh? said the short one. How much did she give this morning?

Dunno about this morning, I said, just managing to tread on Dai's toes in time.

Oh, said Phillips, looking for a pencil, how old would she be now?

Older'n me, she is. It was no good. Dai was going to spoil everything.

I shouldn't wonder, bach, said the short one, putting his head back and laughing hard.

Right ho, boyos, you stay around. Phillips called out to a man in a brown overall: John. Take old Harriet to that stall over there, by the fence.

The man drove Betsy away to a stall, and stuck a label with a number on it on her back.

So Dai and I stood around by Betsy waiting for things to happen. The farmers and the butchers were coming in now. Mr. Leyshon came over and had a look at her. There was another butcher with him. They were both talking quiet. Then after a while Mr. Leyshon nodded towards Betsy and said something, and they both went off laughing.

Two farmers came in late. They were both merry; and one of them said to me:

You with this beast, lad?

Yes, I answered short. I didn't like the way they were slapping Betsy on the back.

Come over old gel. Time she had the pension. Long in the tooth she is. Got any more beasts here?

But I turned the other way to look for Dai; and they went off laughing. And I was crying-angry and I wished I was big enough to hit one of them with my fist. But Dai came back after a bit with a handful of hay he'd

pinched from somewhere for Betsy. So we threw it in to her, and went higher up to listen to the Auction.

Phillips stood on a box inside a stall with three young calves. The man with a brown overall rang a bell and the people strolled across. Phillips had a pencil and a book, and he started talking quicker than a preacher.

We watched him selling, and then we sat down to eat our sandwiches. After that there was nothing else to do but wait until the Auction came round. And Dai, because he was only a young 'un, wanted to go home. So I put him in the corner up against the fence and he went to sleep on some straw.

I sat on the railing by Betsy beginning to wish we were home, myself: Dai and me in school, and Betsy charging through hedges, and waiting for me to come along and find her. Nobody here came up and said: What a fine cow! The people here only poked their thumbs over their shoulders and said: She'd make pretty good leather. And they looked at Dai and me as if we'd strayed in the market by mistake. My eyes began to water. Then I got off the railing and straightened up. Phillips was hurrying over towards us, with his book in his hand, and his hat at the back of his head:

We'll have a look at her now, lad. Ring the bell, John.

Dai woke up at the ringing of the bell, and came across. A small crowd gathered—mostly lookers-on from the village: only a few buyers. There was a queer old woman with a shawl and black hat with feathers amongst the crowd. When I saw her, my heart sunk into my boots for fear she had come to buy Betsy.

Phillips got up and tapped his book with his pencil: Who'll give me a start?

Nobody answered for a while ; then a farmer with side whiskers said :

One pound ! and shut his mouth like a rat-trap.

Come along, gentlemen, said Phillips, passing over the laugh.

What shall we start at ? Five Pounds. Five Pounds, Five . . . He slid his eyes round the crowd, but nobody moved a finger.

Come along, who'll give her a start ?

I wanted to shout out, Five Pounds. I saw Mr. Leyshon standing in the crowd like a stranger. Phillips still had his pencil raised ; but he couldn't get a bid. Then he jumped down sudden off the box, slapped his book shut, and slid in the pencil : Bring the box along, John ; and then he went and the crowd thinned away.

It was all over in a couple of minutes. Mr. Leyshon stopped and said :

You better take her home quietly, Tom. We'll bring her up next fortnight. She'll go then.

The old woman in the shawl was still looking at Betsy. She leaned over and began stroking her ear, saying : Lovely gel, all the time. I almost wished then, that she had bought Betsy, although she was only a queer old woman and wore a funny hat with feathers.

We got Betsy out of the market ; she was as ready to go as we were. When we got past the houses of Pont-Shon-Isaac, I stopped her on the side, and milked her a bit into a rusty old tin, to make it easier for her. We gave the milk to an old dog that had been following us.

The way was much longer going back home. And our Dai began to cry, because he was tired, and we hadn't

sold Betsy. So I let him hold her tail as she walked ; and this kept him quiet till we got to Fiddler's Elbow.

Just by there we heard a pony trotting behind ; we turned round and saw the queer old woman with the feathers, sitting high up in a small trap. She was waving with her whip.

Whoa, Richard, she said, and pulled up just in front of us.

Good boys, you let her go slow. Lovely gel.

She got down from the trap lively enough for an old woman, and went straight to Betsy, who was nipping the top off a hedge at the side of the road. She took to stroking her again :

Tell your father I bought her. Lovely gel. I've taken a proper fancy to her. He'll know me, your father will. I'll take her. Lovely gel.

Her voice was high-pitched and hard like a pebble rattling down a rain-pipe. I didn't like her a bit when I saw her close up—she was a bit cross-eyed as well ; and I was ready to say I was taking the cow home. But before I could speak she'd lifted up her skirt and was fumbling with a cloth bag tied round her waist, next to her grey flannel petticoat. Then out came a bigger bundle of pound-notes than a bum-roll ; and she began counting them over, with Dai and me staring at her as if she were a witch. She counted out ten, and held them out to me :

Five for the cow, bach. Five for the milk. Lovely gel. Good money and good words, bach.

I didn't know what to do. Dai was whispering : Go on our Tom. Take 'em quick. So I put out my hand and the old girl smoothed out her skirt :

You tell father to come and see me if it isn't enough.

We'll turn her on the Daran with Lewis Price, and my man Luther will collect her. Lovely gel !

I held up the notes to the light, like the old man always told me, and the old girl nipped up into the trap:

Hold on to the money tight. Good boys, and go home straight.

So Dai and me left Betsy at Lewis Price's farm and we went home like the crows. Dai was bouncing about like a jacky-jumper top.

They were all happy at home when we showed them the colour of the money. They wanted to know the old girl's name, but we'd forgotten to ask ; but when we said she had a shawl and feathers, they said :

R'Asgorn Dafydd. It's old Mrs. Davies Feathers, from Gilfach-Rhyd. So it is. She got her quilts lined with pound-notes. As rich she is, as butter.

There was ham for supper that night, and our Dai had his spanish. But, thinking over it going to bed, I wasn't pleased at all : because Betsy was sold, and to a queer old woman with a shawl and feathers, and a cross in her eyes at that : and not to a proper farmer with shiny leggings and breeches ; with his hands deep down in his pockets ; who could spit five yards, without wetting his whiskers—just.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

A SHORT HISTORY OF MODERN GREECE, 1821 to 1940. EDWARD S. FORSTER. Methuen. 12s. 6d.

PROFESSOR FORSTER HAS wisely compressed the first 87 years of his history into 39 of the 225 pages. What was wanted was a lucid, sober, accurate and judicious narrative of the complicated history of Greece since the Turkish Revolution of 1908, and this the author has achieved by a remarkable feat of compression. He says in his preface that "anyone who writes about the events in Greece during the years following 1914 has to make up his mind whether he supports the Royalist or the Venizelist Party . . . an impartial survey of the evidence has brought the conviction that Venizelos was right in the drastic measures he took to bring Greece into the war on the side of the Allies and that the results have justified his policy". These words were written before the Germans defiled Greece and so provided a final proof that the mighty Cretan was the greatest statesman any nation has produced in the twentieth century, with the possible exception of Franklyn D. Roosevelt, on whom a final judgment remains to be given. In his anxiety not to let his enthusiasm run away with him Professor Forster counts against Venizelos "his advocacy of the unfortunate war against Turkey in Asia Minor", but surely not even Venizelos could have foreseen the pusillanimity of the British Government which in combination with French treachery, Italian greed and Royalist madness doomed Greek hopes. The author spares a tear for the politicians who were executed in 1922. Will he spare any tears when a bunch of French politicians is summarily

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executed one day ? However, such criticism is merely the expression of a difference of opinion, and I mention it because these two examples happen to be the only differences of opinion I discovered throughout Professor Forster's history. His desire to be fair to the Royalist case has led the author to include in his bibliography two or three books which should not be recommended to the student without a warning that they are subsidised propaganda and as such worthless except as illustrations of deliberately perverted history. For a future edition of what must be a standard work I shall be grateful if Professor Forster will change *Second Athenian Memories* 1936 to *Greek Memories* 1939. This is the single inaccuracy I have been able to detect in a book animated by a passion for justice and truth.

COMPTON MACKENZIE

KABLOONA. GONTRAN DE PONCINS. Introduction by ERIC LINKLATER. Illustrated. Cape. 12s. 6d.

SOME REVIEWERS OF this book have been startled at the "utter savagery" of the Netsillik Eskimos, among whom the author dwelt for a year. Others have seen in the fact that he, an educated European, chose to do so, a sign of the decadence of our civilization. I share neither of these views and for me this is the best book on Eskimos that I have read. It is good both as an account of life among them and of their life.

It seems to me irrelevant to lament that the habits and morals of Eskimos are not ours. What is interesting and to me at any rate important, is that these Canadian Eskimos

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Yet De Poncin, living with them and, by adjustment, trying to live in them, was able to say that the Eskimos had taught him to discard haste, worry, rebelliousness and at the end of his stay in King William's Land, he could write "I see suddenly that my year in the north has not been, as I thought it, a year of conquest of the elements but of conquest of myself".

Whether that conquest should have demanded such drastic methods is beyond the scope of the book, as it is beyond my intention to pursue. I am concerned only to declare that for those who love the North this is a first-rate account of three kinds of life there—native,

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Nature's, and the narrator's. No translator is mentioned, and as the author's name is given on the title page as "in collaboration with Lewis Galantieri", credit must presumably be given to him, too, for some of the frequently fine descriptive writing. The drawings do not come up to the comparison with Rockwell Kent's, which they challenge, but the photographs are excellent.

TED BERGEN

CHRISTMAS BOOKS—I.

PENGUINS AND PELICANS

GENERAL WAVELL'S LEES KNOWLES lectures delivered in 1939 at Trinity College, Cambridge, and published this year in *The Times*, appear as a "Penguin Special", with a foreword by General Sir John Dill, under the title of *Generals and Generalship*. . . . Equally important for the general reader is *World Shipping*, by A. C. Hardy, in the same series. This is a "Notebook on Seaways and Sea Trade, and a Maritime Geography of Routes, Ports, Rivers, Canals, and Cargoes". There are many illustrations by Laurence Dunn and the author concludes his survey with a consideration of the probable future co-operation between ships and aircraft. "While the latter will never completely eliminate the former, it will have a profound effect upon design and speed and therefore upon World Shipping in general."

J. B. S. Haldane's *Science and Everyday Life* (Pelican) consists of seventy articles (reprinted from *The Daily Worker*) in each of which the author has "tried to give a few facts not yet to be found in text-books and which a student leaving a university with an honours degree

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would not be expected to know" . . . *Cine-Biology*, also a Pelican, is "an account of a large section of that vast assembly of living creatures which we call the Animal Kingdom", by J. V. Durden, Mary Field, and Percy Smith, the three experts responsible for the *Secrets of Nature* and *Secrets of Life* films. Scientifically accurate, it is as popular in tone as these and should be equally so in success. It is brilliantly illustrated with "stills" from the films. . . . The screen-version of Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, complete and unabridged and illustrated by Topoloski, heads new additions to the literary section. . . . S. S. Koteliensky's selection of Russian Short Stories in this might well have been more comprehensive, though four tales by Tchekhov make any book good value. . . . Nos. 8 and 9 of *Penguin New Writing* (only about half of which is ever new) show a tendency towards triviality and tiredness. The editor himself complains in No. 9 that of the many manuscripts received "those which showed any quality even slightly out of the ordinary have been such a tiny proportion . . . as for humour, wit, fantasy . . . their traces could not be more completely absent if a law had been passed making them a crime against the national effort". Pearl Binder and Inez Holden are new contributors, jostling such familiar stand-bys as B. L. Coombes, Gordon Jeffery. No. 8 includes Dylan Thomas's story *The Peaches*, which first appeared in *Life and Letters To-Day*, and C. Day Lewis contributes a new poem to each. . . . In his biography of *Sir Walter Raleigh*, specially written for Penguin, Eric Ecclestone wisely deals in turn with the various phases of that Elizabethan's manifold activities, since "a straight biographical narrative can hardly

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"Dinner's ready!" That is a call that thrills everybody on Christmas Day, a cry that on 25th December constitutes a summons to the High Feast of the Year.

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On 25th December the big and little ships of the Merchant Service will sail on just the same as on any other day in the year. It is **"Full Steam Ahead"** for the officers and men whose labours have brought us four meals a day since war broke out.

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Everyone is always so kind. This page of *Life and Letters To-day* is, for instance, a Christmas present, for which the Merchant Navy Comforts Service is grateful.

Knitted comforts are welcome: gifts of money are gratefully acknowledged at National Appeal Headquarters, Merchant Navy Comforts Service, 62 Heath Street, N.W. 3.

And for all the kind wishes that will accompany your gifts, the Merchant Navy, officers and men, say "And the same to you".

do justice to all the diverse aspects of Raleigh's genius".

A. J. Evan's edition of Herodotus is the text of Rawlinson's translation cut to about half for the sake of "the many who have not the time to wade through the original text". Even so, it may be doubted if the labour fulfils its purpose, since the 155 pages are printed in tiring type. The publishers should profit from the example of Everyman and beware lest, in their zeal to cram as much as possible within their covers, they are shortening reading-hours with difficult, ill-spaced print. The first aim of a cheap popular series must always be legibility of type rather than comprehensiveness of contents. The mere limitation of size in the books imposes also a limitation of subject and it is no use compressing the works of authors who did not suffer that limitation if the reader is to find himself forced to put down a volume half-read. In the time I have had at my disposal for this review, which has been generous, it has been impossible to read through the 280 pages of *The Remaking of Italy*, because the tiny type delayed and made difficult the reading. Now especially, though the cry be for books, the cry must not be allowed to become, "And for ones that are legible."

Since wartime-eyes must be soothed when they need not be strained, there is particular satisfaction in the King Penguin *Book of Ships*, with eleven black and white reproductions of famous ships and paintings, and sixteen colour plates, the latter ranging from King Harold's *Arrival at Bosham*, 1065 (Bayeux tapestry) through Brueghel the elder's *Fall of Icarus* to *The Victory at Spithead*, by Robert Dodd.

R. H.



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BOOKS FOR BOYS are so stereotyped that it is a pleasure to find one that breaks new ground. When that ground is Alsatia, the beggars' kingdom of Elizabethan London, one is tempted into superlatives. The temptation is not irresistible because, although the author confesses her debt to that most delightful book, Ronald Fuller's *The Beggars' Brotherhood*, and has made good use of it, her tale somehow just misses high-water mark. Her style is somewhat of a damper to excitement, for she uses a slow prose and has trouble with her sentences. But this should not worry an early-teen reader, who is offered the adventures of a boy who runs away from home, to avoid meeting a stepfather, falls in with a rogue and becomes a member of the Beggars' brotherhood. When this rogue is finally hauled off to prison, the hero's inexperience lands him as servitor to a young coney-catcher. He warns a sea-captain whom his master tries to gull and escapes with him in time to share in the defeat of the Armada.

Though adult eyes may find this somewhat slight, think what a change is here from pirates, and ye jollye outlaws of Sherwood ! Think too how boys, at the gang and slang age, will thrill to the cant of the beggars. And as the approach is realistic as well as romantic, let this book be welcomed generously as something to atone in the reading of those not lucky enough to be brought up on *Children of the New Forest*, Ainsworth's *Tower of London*, and Henty.

EDWARD FARRER

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*Church Standard, Sydney, 29.8.41.*

WELLINGTON. F. W. TICKNER. Illustrated. Nelson.  
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LUCIDITY, NOT LEGEND, is the first requisite of a historical biography and Mr. Tickner passes this test with flying colours. Precisely and clearly he depicts Wellington's career, both as soldier and statesman (from 12 upwards). He writes dispassionately, giving credit when credit is due and careful to point out faults. There is no danger here that the young reader will be dazzled by the genius of the Iron Duke, for that is frequently qualified and as to Wellington's character, the homage paid to it seems to come more from the head than from the heart. Mr. Tickner is so very careful to point out the faults, and sometimes gives his credit in so back-handed a fashion that one wonders at times why he undertook to write the life of one with whom he does not appear to be in full sympathy. This is by no means the Wellington of Stanhope's *Conversations*. It is a life stronger on the career than on the character. The subtler sides of that have eluded the author. This does not prevent his book being a correct, distant introduction to the statesman-soldier whom generations have loved and will love, and all that is really open to criticism in a book of this kind is such a statement as "Marlborough's personal beauty and charming manner made him quite irresistible with his troops" (how characteristic that Wellington was called "Old Hookey" by his men), and the conclusion that, when Wellington was buried in St. Paul's, "here we leave him." Were that so, there would have been neither need nor opportunity for this book, since Wellington was not left there, but lives in most of our hearts.

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LILIAN AINSWORTH

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IT SOUNDS WILFUL to complain that a story for children is childish. But, although the modern child may consider a secret system of passages legitimate in a tale of buried treasure, he will probably think that the cinema (like grand opera) is more "realistic" when he reads that an entrance to the underground workings is in a hollow tree. However, the success of this book does not depend on the doubly unfortunate villain, Mr. "Chinstrap" Jake; it depends on the things the children do when they are getting on with a job in hand. The detailed descriptions of building a raft or constructing a "mouse" for a well only need working drawings to make them utterly engrossing and—there are plenty of such drawings! Grown-ups, who can never resist a map in a detective book, will, if they pick up this book, understand the fascination of the margin pictures, even if they feel slightly annoyed at the ease with which raw materials appear to hand: "She had discovered beneath the long grass and nettles a piece of stout timber about eight feet long . . . etc." Still, *this* is not, I think, a criticism a child would make.

OSWELL BLAKESTON

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

THE SEASONS AND THE FISHERMAN. F. FRASER DARLING. Illustrated by C. F. TUNNICLIFFE. Cambridge University Press. 6s.

THE SEASONS AND THE WOODMAN. D. H. CHAPMAN. Illustrated by C. F. TUNNICLIFFE. Cambridge University Press. 6s.

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The drawings by C. F. Tunncliffe, accurate in detail, are also works of art and so, in this sphere also, contribute to a child's education and delight.

CHARLES CALVERT

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